



## **Ebola Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is Ebola?**

Ebola viral disease is a severe, often fatal disease that affects humans and some animals (like monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees). It is caused by the Ebola virus.

### **How does Ebola spread?**

Ebola virus is spread by directly touching an infected person or animal's skin, blood or body fluids. It cannot be spread simply by being near someone who is infected. Researchers believe that most Ebola outbreaks start when an animal carrying the Ebola virus infects a person, who can then infect other people.

Since the virus can survive on surfaces for a short period of time, people can be infected by touching objects (like needles or bed sheets) that contain infected blood or body fluids.

During outbreaks, the disease can spread quickly within health care settings if workers do not wear protective gear and take proper precautions.

People only become contagious *after* they begin to have symptoms, such as fever.

### **What are the symptoms of Ebola?**

The disease usually starts with an abrupt fever, possibly with headache and joint and muscle aches.

Other symptoms may include:

- Nausea
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite

Some patients may also experience:

- Rash
- Red eyes
- Hiccups
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Chest pain
- Problems breathing
- Problems swallowing
- Bleeding inside and outside the body

### **When do symptoms first appear?**

Symptoms usually appear 8 to 10 days after exposure but may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure.

### **How serious is Ebola?**

The severity of the disease varies, but over 50% of patients with Ebola have died during past outbreaks. Researchers do not fully understand why some people who become sick with Ebola recover while others do not.

### **Where has Ebola been reported?**

In the current outbreak, nearly all confirmed Ebola cases were reported in three African countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Since the situation in East Africa is evolving, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) website for the most up-to-date information on countries affected by Ebola outbreak:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ebola>.

In past outbreaks, cases were reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, South Sudan, Ivory Coast, Uganda, Republic of the Congo (ROC) and South Africa.

### **How is Ebola treated?**

There is no known effective medication for Ebola infection. Treatment focuses on supportive care and may require intensive care unit support.

### **Can Ebola infection be prevented?**

Measures to prevent the disease from spreading include

- Quickly identifying people who might have Ebola virus
- Following infection control guidelines in health care facilities (i.e. sterilizing medical equipment and wearing appropriate personal protective equipment )
- Isolating Ebola patients from contact with uninfected people.

There is no vaccine for Ebola.

### **Am I at risk of getting Ebola?**

If you have not traveled to one of the affected countries in the past three weeks, you are not at risk. Even if you did visit Sierra Leone, Guinea or Liberia, you are not at risk unless you had direct contact with a person or animal with Ebola. The CDC issued a travel advisory urging all U.S. residents to avoid non-essential travel to Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

### **What should I do if I think I have Ebola?**

The only people at risk in the current outbreak are those who traveled to the affected countries **and** might have had direct contact with a person or animal with Ebola. If you visited one of the affected countries, but did not have direct contact with a person or animal with Ebola, you are not at risk.

***If you visited one of the affected countries and develop fever within three weeks after leaving that country, seek medical care right away. Tell your doctor about your recent travel, and be sure to notify the doctor's office or emergency room about your symptoms before going so that arrangements can be made, if needed, to prevent others from becoming sick. For more information, call 347-396-7989.***